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SUBJECT: CHAD: PRESIDENT DEBY'S OCTOBER 16 MEETING WITH
PRESIDENT SARKOZY

REF: NDJAMENA 458

Classified By: David Van Cleve, Acting Political Counselor, 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Chad's President Deby told France's President Sarkozy on October 16 that he would continue to build political dialogue and reconciliation in Chad, that Chad's relations with Sudan were improving after the recent high-level Sudanese delegation's visit to N'Djamena, that Chad needed help reintegrating ex-rebels into civil society, that he would encourage JEM to engage with the Khartoum government, and that Chad would appreciate French help with the IFIs. Sarkozy said that France would support UN and EU efforts to assist with reintegrating ex-rebels and that France would support Chad's efforts at debt reduction. Sarkozy encouraged Deby to "go all the way" with respect to internal political reform, rapprochement with Sudan and Chadian rebels, and a number of human rights issues. The meeting was friendly and relaxed, according to one of Sarkozy's AF-advisors. Khartoum's Special Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahadin, who led the delegation that met with Deby, and South Sudan leader Salva Kiir have tentatively scheduled visits to France in November. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Presidential AF-advisor Romain Serman on October 21 provided a readout on Chad's President Deby's October 16 meeting with French President Sarkozy, a meeting that took place in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, according to Serman.

Internal Political Reform

¶3. (C) Discussion began with Sarkozy referring to the August 13, 2007 accord on political reconciliation in Chad, with Sarkozy suggesting that the accord remained viable and that all parties in Chad should work to achieve its goals. Sarkozy credited Deby for what he had done regarding Chad's electoral commission and the census, both important elements of the upcoming electoral process. He stressed to Deby the need for credible elections. In reply, Deby provided an update, stating that one sticking point had been the issue of voter registration cards (reftel). Deby favored "classic" voter cards that contained basic information confirming the bearer's identity. Others, however, favored biometric cards. Deby thought these were too expensive and a waste of money, but he explained that certain members of the opposition supported the more sophisticated cards because they sought to delay legislative elections. A delay would allow them and their allies to retain their current positions, which they would likely lose if elections took place on time. Sarkozy urged Deby to continue working towards national reconciliation and that he should "go all the way" and not settle for half-measures. (NOTE: Serman said that Sarkozy

employed his "all the way" argument with respect to most other subjects he and Deby discussed. Serman said that Sarkozy was trying to reinforce the need for Deby to take forceful action to overcome Chad's problems and not simply make gestures towards solving them. END NOTE.)

Sudan and the Rebels

¶4. (C) Sarkozy asked about the visit of the Sudanese delegation to N'Djamena led by Special Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salahadin, which had taken place a few days before the Deby-Sarkozy meeting. Deby said that Ghazi's visit had gone well, with Khartoum apparently willing to make a number of commitments. Most notably, the Sudanese said they would make Chad rebels in Sudan move at least 50 kms away from the Chad-Sudan border and that Sudan would make efforts to disarm these rebels. Deby indicated that if Khartoum was sincere in implementing this commitment, he would consider sending a high-level Chadian delegation to Khartoum in return. Deby told Sarkozy that he wanted to "lower the tone" of the Chad-Sudan dialogue, which Sarkozy encouraged him to do.

¶5. (C) As he had on the topic of domestic reconciliation, Sarkozy urged Deby to "go all the way" in terms of reconciling with the Chadian rebels. Deby said he would make an effort. He noted one problem where he hoped that France and other outsiders could provide assistance -- there were now about 6,000 former rebels who had returned to Chad after choosing to leave the rebel movement. These rebels could not be absorbed into Chad's army and therefore needed to be reintegrated into civil society. Sarkozy said that France would try to provide assistance, referring to

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UN and/or EU programs that could serve as vehicles for delivering the help Chad needs.

JEM

¶6. (C) Serman said that Deby made a brief reference to JEM and Khalil Ibrahim, saying that he would urge Khalil Ibrahim to engage with the Khartoum government and that JEM should participate whenever possible in other fora devoted to Sudan/Darfur.

IFIs

¶7. (C) In a short exchange on the IFIs and in response to Deby's request, Sarkozy said that France would try to help Chad in its debt reduction efforts,

Human Rights

¶8. (C) Sarkozy raised the case of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, one of the three opposition leaders who disappeared during the rebels' February 2008 incursion into N'Djamena. His is the only one of the three cases to remain unresolved. Sarkozy urged Deby to carry out an investigation of the case and issue a report. Deby indicated that he would "do the maximum" to resolve the matter. The two leaders also discussed the Koro Toro prison in northern Chad. Serman reported that Sarkozy indicated to Deby the need for some sort of visit to the prison in response to concerns that had been expressed about possible human rights abuses there. Deby, Serman reported, asserted that neither the UN nor ICRC had ever asked to visit the facility.

Possible Sudanese Visits to France

¶9. (C) Serman said that Ghazi and South Sudan President Salva Kiir had made tentative plans to visit France, separately, in November. Nothing was set yet but Serman said that preparations had begun for such visits.

Chad Needs to Keep Working

¶10. (C) Serman summed up by saying that Sarkozy's main message to Deby was to continue working on domestic issues, relations with Sudan, and reconciliation with rebel elements. He advised Deby to persist and to build momentum, rather than to engage on these issues in fits and starts.

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